

VZCZCXRO5927
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV
DE RUEHCV #1103/01 2202229
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 072229Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1591
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001103

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEPT FOR AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/07/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [IS](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: STATE OF BRV-ISRAEL RELATIONS C-NE8-00834

REF: A. STATE 064659
[1](#)B. CARACAS 000969
[1](#)C. CARACAS 000706

CARACAS 00001103 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ,
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) This cable is a response to State 064659
(C-NE8-00834) requesting details on Israeli relations with
Venezuela.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary. Relations between the Bolivarian Republic
of Venezuela (BRV) and Israel are severely strained.
Bilateral relations, cool for the last several months, show
no sign of improving. Israeli embassy officials, Venezuelan
Jewish community leaders, and foreign policy experts are in
general agreement that the BRV's relationship with Iran is
the largest stumbling block. Several interlocutors told
Poloff that anti-Semitic rhetoric and some actions by the BRV
also impedes improvement in the bilateral relationship. End
Summary.

STATE OF BILATERAL POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, MILITARY RELATIONS

[1](#)3. (C) THE ROLE OF IRAN - BRV foreign policy in the Middle
East is heavily slanted towards Iran and against Israel.
Venezuelan foreign policy expert Adolfo Salgueiro of the
Central University of Venezuela opined that Venezuelan
political, economic, and military relations with the Islamic
Republic of Iran were likely the biggest obstacle to a better
relationship with Israel. Venezuelan Foreign Ministry
official Roman Delgado said political relations with Iran
were, "good, and important to us." President Hugo Chavez has
repeatedly called for respect for Iran's nuclear program and
Venezuela opposes the application of UNSC sanctions against
Iran. Venezuelan support for Iran is the central theme in
BRV policy towards the Middle East.

[1](#)4. (C) MIDDLE EAST PEACE - The BRV consistently aligns
itself against Israel, not only on Iran, but also on other
fronts, including the Middle East Peace Process and the 2006
conflict with Hezbollah in Lebanon. Chavez called Colombia
the "Israel of Latin America" when Colombian forces crossed
into Ecuadorian territory and killed former FARC leader Raul
Reyes in March 2008, an act which caused Chavez to deploy
soldiers to the frontier with Colombia. Chavez condemned
Israeli military action in Lebanon in 2006 as, "genocide."
Venezuela withdrew its Ambassador at that time and has not
sent an Ambassador back.

15. (C) POLITICAL/MILITARY RELATIONS - Israeli Embassy Officer Eldad Golan reported to Poloff that his Embassy, comprising himself, a consular official, and the Israeli Ambassador, rarely meet with the BRV Foreign Ministry. Golan said the Venezuelan Embassy in Tel Aviv was staffed by two Venezuelan diplomats, both with rank of Second Secretary. The Israeli Defense Attache left the country in 2005 and has not been replaced. Israeli Ambassador to Venezuela Shlomo Cohen has been in Venezuela for five years and does not know if he will be replaced when he leaves. Golan said the failed Israeli-Venezuelan agreement to upgrade Venezuelan F-16's marked a turning point in relations, and that since then, ties had cooled considerably. Arms transfers from Israel to Venezuela are unlikely in the near term. Venezuelan efforts to counter terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and FARC have been extremely limited and generally inadequate, and cooperation with Israel in this area especially so. Hezbollah elements are generally believed to raise funds in Venezuela for activities in Lebanon.

16. (C) ECONOMIC RELATIONS - Economic cooperation between the BRV and Israel based on agriculture and technology exchanges was brisk before 2005 and has since declined. On the other hand, official efforts exist in Venezuela to increase, rather than limit Iran's economic as well as political influence on the region. Presidents Chavez and Ahmadinejad have signed a series bilateral accords in recent years designed to increase BRV-Iranian agricultural, aviation, energy, health, housing, industrial, and mining cooperation.

ISRAEL AND MERCOSUR

17. (C) As Venezuela awaits ratification to become a full
CARACAS 00001103 002.2 OF 002

member of Mercosur, it does not appear that Israel's associate membership in the trade bloc has had or will have any effect on the BRV-Israeli relationship. While Venezuela awaits its fate with respect to congressional ratification in Mercosur member states, Israel has not challenged the membership of Venezuela in the organization.

VENEZUELA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY

18. (C) The Jewish community in Venezuela has been under increasing pressure from the BRV in the last several years. Official expressions of anti-Semitism in state media have also seen a recent increase (refs B and C). The special police (DISIP) raided the Caracas Jewish Community center, which includes a school, in 2005 and again in late 2007, ostensibly to search for illegal weapons. They found none. Golan told Poloff that the Israeli Embassy was in constant contact with Jewish community leaders to monitor the community's concerns. He said his embassy was concerned with their situation and formulated its foreign policy towards Venezuela accordingly.

19. (SBU) Department of State Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism Gregg Rickman visited Venezuela June 29-July 1, 2008. See Ref B for a report on his visit.
DUDDY